

America Next to You

Discovering USA

NO. 3

DECEMBER 2007

DECEMBER EVENTS:

- Hanukkah
- Human Rights Day
- Christmas
- Kwanzaa

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Christmas

Christmas Day is celebrated on December 25 almost in all places around the world. The holiday combines activities which celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and ancient traditions of winter festivals. Eastern Orthodox Churches celebrate Christmas on January 7, which is the Julian Calendar version of December 25.

One of the reasons that the early Church created the Christmas celebration was to make the Christianity more attractive for the pagan Romans, who would not want to lose their winter celebrations, which were very popular at those ages.

Saturnalia was a winter festival that began on December 17 and included general relaxation, feasting, drinking, singing, gambling, making and giving of small presents. *Dies natalis solis invicti* ("the birthday of the unconquered sun"), held on December 25, was a day that celebrates the solar deities: Elah-Gabal, a Syrian sun god, Sol, the god of Emperor Aurelian, and Mithras, a god of Persian origin. In the same time, December 25 was considered to be the date of the winter solstice.

The pagan celebrations of the Northern Europe had a major influence on Christmas, as that



Adoration of the Child, by Fra Angelico (Source: Wikipedia)

part of the Europe was the last part to Christianize. For the Germanic tribes, the winter festival of eating, drinking and celebrating was held 12 nights beginning with the mid-winter night.

The reason why and the time when the day of the 25th of December became associated with the birth of Jesus Christ it is unknown. In "Chronographiai" (221 AD), Sextus Julius Africanus wrote that Christ was born on December 25, nine months after

the Incarnation (March 25). Early Christians believe that March 25 (also the date of vernal equinox) was the date when Christ was crucified, an idea that is similar with the Jewish belief regarding the life of a prophet, which consisted on an integral number of years.

Thus, December 25 is a traditional birthday for Christ, and it is not considered his actual birthday.

"Calendar of Filocalus", a manuscript compiled in Rome in 354 AD, contains the first reference to the celebration of Christmas as a holiday. In the United States, Christmas was considered an English custom after the American Revolution, and the people act accordingly. After several attempts to reconsider the Christian holiday (stories by Washington Irving, Clement Clarke Moore, at the beginning of 19th century), Christmas was declared a federal holiday in 1870, signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant.

Source:
Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia (www.wikipedia.org)

Hanukkah



Hanukiyot on the eighth night of Hanukkah (Source: Wikipedia)

The eight-day Jewish Festival of Lights marks the re-dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem after its desecration by the forces of Antiochus IV (ca. 215-164 BC) and commemorates the miracle of the container of oil, which, according to the Talmud, remained only enough fuel for the eternal

flame for one day but burned eight days, time enough for prepare and consecrate fresh olive oil. Hanukkah begins on the 25th day of Kislev according to the Hebrew calendar, so it may fall anytime from late November to late December and is celebrated

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Hanukkah

(continued from page 1)

by daily family-based or communal rituals. For eight nights, a light of a special candelabrum ("Hanukiah" or Hanukkah "Menorah") is lit, with an extra light called "shamas" ("guard" or "servant"), the number of lights increasing by one each night. The lights, which should burn for at least one half hour after dark, can be candles, oil lamps, or electric lights, and are set up at a window or near the door for the passers-by who could see it and be reminded of the holiday's miracle.

During the holiday, usually three blessings are recited, before or after the candles are lit. Ashkenazim (or some Sephardim and Mizrahim in Western countries)

sing the hymn Ma'oz Tzur, which speaks about divine salvation, the persecution in Jewish history, and praises God for the survival of these tragedies. In many Jewish homes, other songs are sung and other prayers are recited on Hanukkah days.

It is customary for children to play dreidel, a four-sided spinning top, imprinted on each side with a Hebrew letter (acronyms for the Hebrew "Nes Gadol Haya Sham" – "A great miracle happened there"), each player starting with 10 or 15 coins (real or of chocolate), nuts, raisins, candies, etc.

The traditional Hanukkah foods include potato pancakes, fruit filled doughnuts, and all Kosher foods fried or baked in olive

oil.

In North America, it is common to give presents, and the traditional money coins given to children was changed into gifts, so that the Jewish children won't have the feeling that they are left out of the Christmas gift giving. The increasing importance of Hanukkah (a minor Jewish holiday), in North America especially, is the result of the desire of numerous secular Jewish families, who want a Jewish alternative to the Christmas celebrations.

Source:

Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia (www.wikipedia.org)

Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is a Pan-African festival observed from December 26 to January 1 each year almost exclusively in the United States of America. Its name derived from "*matunda ya kwanza*", which means "*first fruits*" in Swahili, and it was added an "a" so that the word have seven letters.

Established in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga (professor at California State University, Long Beach, Department of Black Studies) as a holiday which celebrates African community and culture, Kwanzaa serve several functions: it is an expression of recovery of African culture (it was launched in the middle of Black Freedom Movement), it is an initiative to reaffirm the bonds between the African-American people, and was created for introducing the *Nguzo Saba* ("*seven principles*" in Swahili), which are: Umoja" – "Unity", "Kujichagulia" – "Self-Determination", "Ujima" – "Collective Work and Responsibility", "Ujamaa" – "Cooperative Economics", "Nia" – "Purpose",

"Kuumba" – "Creativity", and "Imani" – "Faith". The Kwanzaa symbols, "Mazao" – "The Crops", "Mkeka" – "The Mat", "Kinara" – "The Candle Holder", "Muhindi" – "The Corn", "Mishumaa Saba" – "The Seven Candles", "Kikombe cha Umoja" – "The Unity Cup", "Zawadi" – "The Gifts", "Bendera" – "The Flag" (black, red and green), "the Nguzo Saba Poster" – "The Seven Principles Poster", represent the values of African culture.



A woman lighting candles on Kwanzaa (Source: Wikipedia)

The celebration of Kwanzaa includes house decorating with

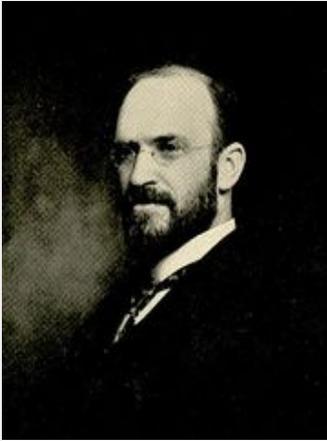
art objects, African cloth, fresh fruits, libations, drumming, a reading of the "African Pledge" and of the Principles of Blackness, a candle-lighting ritual (one candle for each of the seven days celebration), discussions, artistic performance, and a feast. The usual greeting is "Habari Gani?", "What's the news?" in Swahili.

Many African-American families celebrate today Kwanzaa along with Christmas and New Year. Kwanzaa is a cultural holiday and not a religious one, which is making it available to all Africans who want to celebrate and remember their common African roots, their cultural heritage, and also - after the most recent interpretation of Karenga's philosophy – for all the people who want to celebrate their common humanity.

Source:

1. www.wikipedia.org
2. www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org (official Kwanzaa website)

Melvil Dewey



Melvil Dewey

(Source: Wikipedia)

The inventor of Dewey Decimal Classification system for libraries, co-founder (with his friend Charles Ammi Cutter) of the American Library Association – ALA (1876),

the editor of “Library Journal” (1876), advocate for English spelling reform, Melville Louis Kossuth Dewey was born on December 10, 1851, near New York.

Being attracted to mathematics from an early age and confronted with the rigid classification system used by the libraries in the 19th century, he created and developed a different way to classify books, with universal applicability, which categorized books according to their subject. The Amherst College published the Dewey classification system, “A Classification and Subject Index for Cataloguing and Arranging the Books and Pamphlets of a Library”, in 1876.

His classification system of books, covering all human knowledge, has ten main classes subdivided in ten divisions, with ten sections each:

000 – General works,
100 – Philosophy and psychology,
200 – Religion,
300 – Social sciences,
400 – Language,
500 – Natural Sciences and Mathematics,
600 – Technology,
700 – Arts,
800 – Literature,
900 – History and geography.

The Dewey decimal system formed the basis of Universal Decimal Classification developed at the end of 19th century by the Belgian bibliographers Paul Otlet and Henri la Fontaine.

Source:

Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia (www.wikipedia.org)

“The time was when a library was very much like a museum, and a librarian was a mouser in musty books... The time is when a library is a school, and the librarian is in the highest sense a teacher”.

MELVIL DEWEY, “American Library Journal”, September 1876

Human Rights Day

Human Rights Day is celebrated across the world in 10 December, and was initiated in 1950 to honour the adoption and proclamation of the “*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*” by the United Nations on 10 December 1948. The day is marked by conferences, meetings, cultural events, exhibitions, contests, etc. concerning the human rights. In the same day, the United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights is awarded.

The “human rights” concept is universally present in all religions, cultures and philosophies of human kind. The Code of Ur-Nammu (the oldest legal codex, ca. 2050 BC), the Code of Hammurabi (ca. 1780 BC), the Vedas, the Bible, the Qur’an, the Analects of Confucius (ca. 479 BC-221 BC) are documents and codices that speak about human rights.

The Cyrus Cylinder of Cyrus the Great (539 BC) is considered the

world’s first charter of human rights, its inscriptions speaking about different human rights as religious freedom, liberty, security, free movement, property, economic and social rights. “*Magna Carta*” (1215), the world’s first document addressed by a sovereign to his people, containing information about respecting legal rights, is considered one of the most important documents in the history of democracy.

The “*United States Declaration of Independence*” (1776) includes the con-

cept of natural rights (developed by John Locke) and states that all men are equal and that they have inalienable rights, such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, the “*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*” stated that all humans are born free and equal in dignity and rights, equal before the law and that all the people has the right to life, liberty and security.

There are many regional documents and organizations that promote human rights, but The United Nations (1945) is the only international entity with universally accepted jurisdiction for universal human rights legislation.

Source:

1. www.wikipedia.org
2. www.un.org (official site of United Nations)



Cyrus Cylinder (Source: Wikipedia)

Peace Corps Volunteers in Romania

"The Peace Corps is an outstanding organization that promotes peace through helping countless individuals who want to help build a better life for the community in which they serve." – Congressman Solomon Ortiz (D-TX)

The American Peace Corps is a volunteer organization that sends U.S. citizens all over the world. It promotes peace by encouraging cultural exchanges and providing services to areas of need such as education, healthcare, economic development, and the environment. The organization came to Romania in 1991, in an agreement with the Romanian government to allow the Peace Corps to set up development projects in the country. Today, there are over 150 Peace Corps Volunteers in Romania, continuing four established programs - Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Community Economic Development, Institutional Development, and Environmental Development. Each section is very different, and the volunteers are put in towns or cities everywhere across the country, but the main administrative office is located in Bucharest.



Volunteers hiking in the mountains

In the United States, being a member of the Peace Corps carries with it the idea of going to see a vastly different culture, and perhaps being part of a development organization in a remote or rustic location. Many people become volunteers to learn about development, to learn about other cultures, and also to perform some needed service in another part of the world.

It is not seen as a military service, but it has similarities in the expectation to serve a set amount of time in one location and to follow an oath of service to the United States. The Peace Corps became famous in the United States after President John F. Kennedy founded it in 1961. He was at the time hoping to improve America's foreign

relations and the ideas that Americans had about other cultures. In addition, the Peace Corps started with the ideals that Americans could be self-starting, diligent, and creative individuals who would be able to go out into the world and do good work. Today, there are over 7,000 volunteers in the Peace Corps worldwide, and they serve in both undeveloped and developing nations. The main goals of the organization have not changed, which are: to help Americans learn about other cultures, help other cultures learn about American culture, and to provide services in the form of volunteer work in areas of need.

Other than these three common goals, being a Peace Corps Volunteer in any two nations in the world has its own set of expectations and challenges. With countries as different as the Ukraine, Haiti, and Kenya, there can be no one group of volunteers with the same experience as any other group. Even in the same country, many volunteers have different foreign counterparts and groups with which to work. Being a Peace Corps Volunteer in Romania could be as different as helping students to learn English as they listen to a native speaker, or helping a non-governmental organization perform research and train its members to create sustainable programs. Volunteers in Romania range in age from 21 to 75 years old, and can be anyone from newly graduated college students, to retired professionals in many different areas of work.

Peace Corps Volunteers do share a good amount of optimism in all of the kinds of work they do, and an understanding that no matter where they are in their two-year term, they are meant to be of service to the Romanian people. In the best of the Peace Corps volunteer sites, the product of Americans and Romanians working together creates a lasting, invaluable friendship, and a mutual effort to further develop the community.

To accomplish the goals of the organization, all of the Peace Corps Volunteers in Romania receive ten weeks of training before the service begins, and before they depart to their sites. There is training in language, culture, and the areas of work such as institutional development or education. This time is when each group of volunteers forms cultural sensitivity and helps

decide where they will be placed - from a small village in the Northern Mountains, to a city next to the Danube Delta. During the training time, the volunteer is given a host family to live with for ten weeks, to help the process of integration and to help the volunteer learn more about Romania.



Volunteers at a construction camp

After the training period, volunteers swear in and go to their respective areas of service. They are given living allowances from the Peace Corps, and housing for volunteer English teachers is provided through each school. An important aspect for all of the volunteers is integration, which means trying to be an authentic part of the community in which he or she serves. Learning the Romanian (and sometimes Hungarian) language is extremely important, as well as interacting in the daily life of each community. After integrating into the community, it is easier for the volunteer to facilitate projects with other community members. These projects can be a wide range of things, such as creating an English club at school or in the community, or starting events for human rights awareness. Examples of these projects in Romania are the G.L.O.W. and T.O.B.E. summer camps (Girls Leading Our World and Teaching Our Boys Excellence) which teach life skills to young people. Volunteers often work on small projects such as school Halloween parties, environmental clubs, and park renovations.

After the end of the two years, volunteers have a lasting connection to Romanian people and culture. They often stay in the area of service-related professions. Many volunteers, after having helped their communities, say that they have learned more from their organizations and projects in Romania than they believe they have taught themselves.

BETH BRYANT
Peace Corps Volunteer - Romania

Important events U.S. - Romania

- U.S. Ambassador Nicholas F. Taubman inspected in November 19, 2007, the progress of Transilvania Highway near Cluj-Napoca, having the next day a meeting with Cluj-Napoca's mayor, Emil Boc, and also with American and Romanian businessmen. Mr. Nicholas Taubman emphasized the fact that the highway will be a modern link to the rest of Europe and will raise the standard of living. In November 20, 2007, the Ambassador visited "Octavian Goga" Cluj County Library, where he had a press conference.
- The United States Federal Bureau of Investigation donated in November 28, 2007, 75,000 USD consisting in a fully equipped multimedia law enforcement library to the SECI Regional Center for Combating Trans-border Crime. The Center, headquartered in Bucharest, is an organization which reunites police and customs liaison officers from the 12 member states (Albania, Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey), and 20 observers, countries and organizations. Interpol and World Customs Organization are permanent advisors to the SECI Center; Italy and the United States maintain a permanent representation at the Center.

- General Inspection of Romanian Police and the US Embassy in Bucharest organized in November 27-29, 2007, the National Conference of the specialists on electronic criminality combat and prevention. The discussions emphasized the electronic criminality combat in Romania, the international cooperation in the domain, security measures, internet banking solutions, on-line paying ways, the electronic commerce in Romania, electronic criminality cases instrumented by the Romanian Police.

- The appointment of Romanian soccer player Bănel Nicolită as UEFA Ambassador against

racism was celebrated by the U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Mark Taplin, foreign embassy officials, politicians, civil society representatives, children, etc. in December 7, 2007, in Bucharest. The event was part of "Racism Breaks the Game" Campaign, supported by UEFA, campaign designed to combat racism in football and promote tolerance and fair-play through football.

- In November and December 2007, the Dermatology Clinic of Constanța County Emergency Hospital was refurbished by American sailors from Naval Marine Construction Battalion 40, based in Port Hueneme, California. "Navy Seabees", from Mihail Kogălniceanu air base, specializing in construction, disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, patched and painted the walls and replaced the electric network.

"There is no doubt that Romania has made incredible strides in the last few years. First NATO and then EU membership - these are major achievements for which this country, its people and its leaders should be rightfully proud. But both NATO and the EU are means, not ends. The transformation must continue; economic and judicial reforms must be consolidated and extended".

**U.S. Ambassador
NICHOLAS F.
TAUBMAN,
Cluj-Napoca,
November, 2007**

This month in the U.S. history

Births

Dec 1 (1935): **Woody Allen (Allen Stewart Könisberg)**, three-time Academy Award winning film director, writer, actor, jazz musician, and playwright
 Dec 5 (1901): **Walter Elias Disney**, film producer, director, screenwriter, philanthropist, 26 time Academy Award-winner
 Dec 10 (1830): **Emily Dickison**, poet
 Dec 10 (1851): **Melville Louis Kossuth Dewey**, librarian, inventor of Dewey Classification System

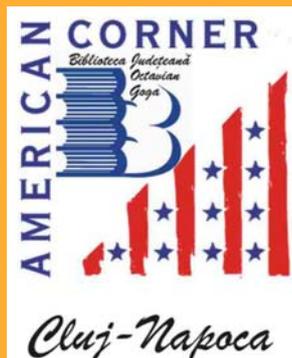
Dec 12 (1915): **Frank Sinatra (Francis Albert Sinatra)**, jazz singer, Academy Award-winning actor
 Dec 18 (1946): **Steven Spielberg**, film director and producer, three-time Academy Award winner
 Dec 25 (1899): **Humphrey DeForest Bogart**, Academy Award-winning actor
 Dec 26 (1891): **Henry Valentine Miller**, writer and painter
 Dec 31 (1880): **George Catlett Marshall**, military leader, winner of Nobel Peace Prize

Events

December 4 (1945): The Senate approved U.S. participation in the United Nations.
 December 15 (1791): The Bill of Rights took effect with Virginia's ratification of it.
 December 18 (1865): Slavery was abolished with the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution.



Walt Disney
(Source: Wikipedia)



Cluj County Library

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Opening hours: Monday: 13.00-20.00, Tuesday-Friday: 9.00-20.00

Saturday: 9.00-16.00, Sunday: closed

We're on the web!
www.bjc.ro/ac.html

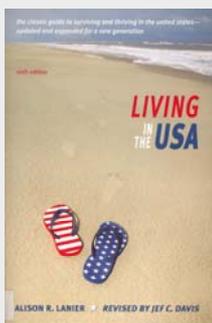


American Corner Cluj-Napoca is a result of a partnership between U.S. Embassy at Bucharest and "Octavian Goga" Cluj County Library. Opened in December 2006, the American Corner is an information and resource center for the public of all ages interested in U.S. life and culture.

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The redaction team: Georgeta Dodu, Ema Tudor, Aura Câmpan. Corrector: Beth Bryant.

American Corner Cluj-Napoca Collection

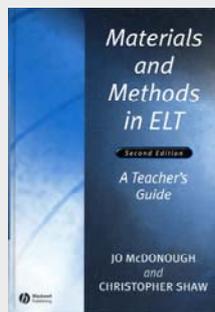


Lanier, Alison R. *Living in the USA*.- Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, 2005

As it is written on the first cover, this book is "the classic guide to surviving and thriving in the United States".

The book begins with the description of some important topics about USA, like the dominant U.S. American values, the American culture and the American social, civic, religious, family and business life. "Living in the USA" provides information for both short-term and long-term visitors, from immigration, money, medical care, food customs, communications to renting or buying a house, shopping for the new home, household help and care of children, education and modalities to find friends and have fun. It also

presents some twenty first century issues: the effects of September 11, 2001, the impact of the War in Iraq, the world leadership. Ending with the national holidays and the conversions for the temperature, weights and measures, clothing sizes and translating cooking measures, important information to know while staying here, "Living in the USA" is a really helpful guide for those who intend to stay here no matter how long.



McDonough, Jo; Shaw, Christopher. *Materials and Methods in ELT. A Teacher's Guide*.- Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003

The book is written for teachers and for those taking professional courses in English language teaching (ELT).

The first part's topics are the educational framework, the communicative approach, post-communicative trends in syllabus and materials design and the evaluation and adaptation of materials. Part two shows how the design and use of teaching materials are affected by the theories concerned with the development of reading, speaking, listening and writing. The third part examines different methods of organizing and managing the ELT classroom, and discusses group and pair work, individualization, classroom observation and the teacher's role in the contemporary ELT context. This second edition has been completely revised and updated: it features a number of new sections, including task-based learning, the use of the internet, and teacher-research, as well as new samples from current teaching materials, and includes an appendix with a selected list of key websites for teachers and students.

Jo McDonough is Senior Lecturer in ELT in the Department of Language and Linguistics at the University of Essex. Christopher Shaw is Senior Teaching Fellow in the English Language Teaching Centre at the University of Essex.